

WELLINGTON (Somerset)  
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

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# Annual Report

FOR 1900,

BY DR. J. MEREDITH,

*Medical Officer of Health.*

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*J. H. Meredith*  
*Croft*



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SIR,—I have the honour to submit my annual report of the health and sanitary condition of the Urban Sanitary District of Wellington, Somerset, for the year 1900. The Geological formation of the District has been fully described in the report for 1893. The chief industries of the place have also been described.

*Water Supply.*—The water supply of the town has been plentiful and good during last year. There has been no complaint from occupants of houses situated on the higher levels, or the Wellesley Park Estate, of inadequate supplies, and the new storage tank has answered all reasonable expectations. The efficiency of the supply has been all the more through the laying of an additional five-inch main from the new tank to existing main in Bulford Lane. This will also be found of great advantage in case of fire, as the pressure is very much increased thereby. There are still several wells in use in the town; some of these came under notice last year, and when the water in three of them was, on analysis, found to be impure they were closed by orders from the Urban Council. Thirty-four more houses were supplied with water from the town main during last year.

*Special Dairy Report.*—In the month of April last I made a special report regarding dairies, cowsheds, etc., in the district, from which the milk supply of the inhabitants is chiefly obtained. Nearly all my inspections were made in company with the Sanitary Inspector of the District. Taking the queries as tabulated in the communication, the first is as to the sanitary condition of farms. These, as far as the dairy cows are con-



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cerned, appeared satisfactory and called for no special observation. The farms are grazing fields and in none that I visited was it admitted that the cattle had sewage water for drinking, although the streams from which the cows drank had in two or three instances some sewage matter poured into them at some distance higher up. There was considerable difference in the condition of the cow-sheds inspected. In many instances the floors of the sheds are made of rough paving stones which have holes and spaces between them. These holes get filled with liquids and droppings and are not easily cleaned, the bedding over these is usually only a thin layer of straw. Cows lying down on such surfaces get their udders and quarters soiled. In several instances it was manifest that sufficient attention was not paid to the condition of the floors and beddings. On the other hand, as will be seen from the individual reports, there are others who attend to these things with reasonable care. In all the places examined I found that the milch cows were only kept in the sheds at night or during milking. In one or two places I noticed that the cows looked thin and not in good condition, but I saw none that were sickly. I found some difference, too, in the practice of milking. All the men engaged in this profess to wash their hands before resorting to the work, and some stated that they cleaned the teats and udders, too, before commencing to milk. I am satisfied, however, that this is not efficiently done in all cases. As a consequence there is found in the milking can—foreign matter from the soiled udders and quarters. It is true that nearly all this may be caught in the strainer, but it is not all arrested. Between the time of milking and straining, which may be considerable in some cases, the flakes of dirt are apt to dissolve to a more or less extent in the warm milk. The strainers used are all of the same description and are probably deemed the best for the purpose, but they pass minute particles of matter through which, in such sensitive substance as fresh milk, are apt to set up an injurious action. The arrangements connected with milk storing, dairy rooms, cleaning cans, etc., were generally satisfactory, in some instances very good. The water supplies of sheds and dairies were upon the whole satisfactory.





*Inspections* —The attention of the Urban Council was directed to three instances of persons keeping pigs within the Bye-laws limits and so creating nuisances. Orders were issued for abatement and duly complied with. I am glad to say that this form of nuisance is less frequently met with than it used to be. Some instances came under notice of persons keeping pig-wash near their dwellings until it became an offensive nuisance. The noxious smell appears to develop so gradually that apparently in some instances those immediately concerned do not perceive it. Nuisances from choked drains are more frequent than from pig-keeping, but less than they used to be, and they are often the result of carelessness on the part of cottagers or their children. The sewage of a few houses on the south side of the town used to flow until lately on the side of the public road, but as this was justly complained of as a nuisance, it has been conveyed by pipes into a small septic tank constructed in an adjoining field at a distance of about 200 yards from the dwellings, and the arrangement seems to work satisfactorily. A couple of instances came under notice of fowls being kept too near dwelling places and causing nuisances from not being kept in a cleanly condition, but on representation these were abated. Two cases came under notice, one in July and the other in August, where through manifest scamping of work houses suffered from ingress of sewer air. The down pipes of the water closet were imperfectly joined to the outer drains, and they were not syphoned against sewer air entering the houses. (This condition of things was frequently met with years ago). The various bakeries and slaughter-houses in the district were regularly visited both by the Sanitary Inspector and myself during the year, but nothing beyond some minor short-comings called for notice.

*Notifications.*—There were 18 notifications of infectious diseases named during the year. Five of these related to diphtheria and were reported from different localities at different times of the year. Two of these were recorded in February. The cases were in different streets of the town and were not connected with one another; one, in April, an isolated case in a family where there were other children. The fourth case was reported in September and appears to have been a comparatively mild ailment. The fifth was





notified at the end of October. The circumstances connected with each case were fully inquired into, and all necessary precautions taken to prevent the disease spreading.

*Scarlet Fever.*—Six cases of scarlet fever came under notice. Three of these occurred in the same family, but only two in the same house. The outbreak was clearly imported in February presumably from the district of Taunton, but the evidence is not wholly conclusive. The remaining three cases occurring at different periods were isolated ones, and as far as it could be ascertained not connected in any way with any previous similar diseases in the district. Careful attention in the way of measures for prevention were exercised in each case, and there has been no further notification of the illness since October.

*Enteric.*—Six cases also of enteric fever were reported. The first came under notice in April and appeared to have been a mild if not of doubtful character. Four cases occurred in the same family and dwelling in May. When I inspected this dwelling I learnt that a couple of casks of pig-wash were kept near the back door until within a day or two of my visiting the place. This pig-wash was reported to me by passers-by as being often very offensive. The first suspicious illness in the house was that of a young girl attending school who was "out of sorts" with a depressing form of diarrhoea for some days. Before long the father of the family with two of his sons were laid up with undoubted enteric fever, and a week later the mother. Very careful attention was bestowed upon these cases with the result that all the cases recovered, and the illness did not spread. The sixth case came under notice in November. It was that of a man of business who undoubtedly contracted the disorder when away on his journey. The 18th case noticed calls for no special notice.

*Measles.*—The only general epidemic illness that spread to any extent in the district was measles. The first cases of it came under notice in June, in connection with two schools in the town, and by all accounts were imported by pupils who went to their homes in places to the East of Wellington where measles then existed. The epidemic proved upon the whole of a mild character, and the three deaths that resulted



from it were those of weakly children. It did not spread very rapidly, but by the end of September the attendance at the elementary schools fell off, and as there was reason for thinking that the schools were becoming centres of dissemination, one by one they were all closed for different periods, except the elementary school at Holywell Lake, which escaped the outbreak possibly because it draws its pupils from scattered and less populous areas than in the town. I have not heard of any cases coming under notice since the beginning of November, but there may have been some.

*Births.* — Statistical tables for last year show there were 175 births: 83 boys and 92 girls, being a birth-rate of 23·7 per thousand inhabitants. This is 2·1 less than the average of the last ten years. The highest rate was in 1893, which was 38·5; and the lowest was in 1897, when it stood at 22·35.

*Deaths.* — There were 141 deaths in the district last year, being 19·1 per thousand. The average for the preceding ten years was 16·99. The highest death rate was in 1890, when it stood at 21·968; and the lowest was in 1892, when it was only 15·081. Table No. 1, forwarded herewith, shows the number of births and deaths for a period of eleven years. Table 2 calls for a return of deaths but directs the exclusion of deaths of non-residents, which in the year under notice amounted to 14. This must be remembered, otherwise one might think that the actual number of deaths by merely looking at the table was only 127 and the death-rate only 16 per thousand. Table 3 refers to the infectious diseases notified which have been dealt with already, excepting as regards ages. Six of the cases were between one and five years of age, five between five and 15, two between 15 and 25, and five between 25 and 65. Table 4 gives causes of and ages at death. Measles caused the death of three very young children, and there was one death between the age of 15 and 25 due to scarlet fever. Three succumbed to diphtheria and membranous croup, two being between one and five years of age, and one between five and 15. Croup caused two deaths in children under one year of age. There were no deaths from enteric or other continued fevers. Influenza caused five deaths. One was the case of a child between one and five years,



two between 25 and 65, and two 65 and upwards. There have been no cases of cholera or plague. Several communications were however received from the Local Government Board in reference to these diseases as to measures to be adopted in the event of an invasion. Diarrhœa caused three deaths, one in a person between 25 and 65, and two of 65 and upwards. Enteritis was responsible for six deaths; two of these were of children under one year of age, one between one and five, one between five and 15, another between 25 and 65, and one of 65 and upwards. There were no deaths from erysipelas or puerperal fever, and only one above the age of 65 from septic disease. Four deaths resulted from phthisis, a number below the average of former years, two of these were between 15 and 25 and two between 25 and 65. There were three deaths from other forms of tubercular diseases, one between the age of five and 15, another between 15 and 25, and the third was between 25 and 65. Cancer caused four deaths, three of the sufferers were between 25 and 65, and one was over 65. Thirty-one persons died from bronchitis, pneumonia, and other ailments of the respiratory organs. Of these, three were under one year of age, six between one and five, two between five and 15, five between 25 and 65, and fifteen 65 and upwards; and there were five deaths under these heads that occurred at a public institution, and it is not clear whether, according to the form, their ages are called for. Three persons died from alcoholism and its sequelæ. One infant died soon after birth, which occurred prematurely. Thirty died from different forms of heart disease, two were under one year of age, two between five and 15, one between 15 and 25, nine between 25 and 65, and 14 were 65 and over, and there were two who died at a public institution. Two deaths occurred from accidents, one between 15 and 25, and one between 25 and 65. Other forms of diseases were responsible for 34 deaths: of these, five were under one year, one between one and five, one between five and 15, three between 15 and 25, five between 25 and 65, and 12 of 65 and upwards; seven more died at a public institution. It is a coincidence that the number 14 who died at a public institution is the same as the number of persons who died in the district and were not regular inhabitants of it.





*Sewage Disposal.*—A good deal of attention has been given to sewage disposal during the past year and means are being adopted for carrying out works on the Bacteria System of Treatment. Plans have been prepared for new sewers and disposal works and negotiations are in progress for obtaining the necessary land and easements required for the several works, and I have no doubt but that the scheme and arrangements will be sufficiently advanced so as to be laid before the Local Government Board at an early date.

*Rainfall.*—The rainfall of the year was 32·16 inches, and it rained sufficiently to be gauged on 190 days. The highest rainfall for a single day was on the 30th of December last, and the next highest was on the 6th of January of last year; one amounted to 1.15 inches and the other to 1.10 inches.

*Vagrants.*—1432 vagrants stayed at the casual ward in the town: 39 of them were children, 81 women, and 1312 men. They have not been credited with being the importers of infectious illness into the district, and I have not had occasion to detain anyone on account of such a thing. There is now no licensed common lodging-house in the town. The house that used to be licensed for the purpose became too dilapidated and has had to be abandoned.

I have had the Inspector's books before me again in preparing my report as in former years. —I have the honour to be, Sir, your humble servant,

JOHN MEREDITH, M.D.

Medical Officer of Health, Wellington, Somerset.



